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ABSTRACT

A survey was conducted in 1979 of teachers who had taken a course on behavior problems to determine the course's effectiveness. Information was sought on teachers' concerns about discipline, perceptions of causes of discipline problems, and effectiveness of various techniques presented in the course for classroom application. A group of teachers who had not had the behavior problems class were also surveyed to determine if their concerns were similar. Responses were obtained from 461 elementary and secondary school teacher. In this study, as in a previous 1978 survey of teachers who had taken the behavior problems course, the most overwhelming finding was that parent and family attitudes were felt to be a primary contributor to classroom behavior problems. In both studies, nearly 90 percent of the sample chose parent and family attitudes as a strong cause of discipline problems. Learning problems were considered a strong cause of discipline problems by almost the same percentage of respondents, but student self-concept was considered a stronger cause in the 1978 study than in the 1979 study. Findings of both studies indicated that teachers were less concerned about drug and sex behaviors and more concerned about motivation and interaction problems of students, teachers, schools, and families. In the evaluation of discipline approaches and techniques, there were wide discrepancies among respondents in the 1979 survey, with no item receiving clear acceptance or nonacceptance. This was less true in the 1978 study. A significant finding in this category was not the comparison of the two studies but the lack of familiarity with various discipline approaches and techniques expressed by the teachers who had not had the behavior problems class. (JD)

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GRADUATE STUDIES RESEARCH GRANT

A COMPARISON OF THE CONCERNS RELATED TO STUDENT DISCIPLINE HELD BY TEACHERS WHO HAVE STUDIED CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES WITH THE CONCERNS OF OTHER CLASSROOM TEACHERS

Final Project Report

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January 8, 1980

Submitted to Division of Sponsored Research

Copy to Dean C.C. Miller
College of Education

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SP 014 157

Background and Problem Statement

"Lack of discipline" continues to be targeted in surveys of educators and the general public as the primary problem of public schools, both nationally and locally (Gallup, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979). An extensive telephone survey conducted in Orange County in 1978 showed local concern; to the question, "What are the things you don't like about the local public schools?", "school discipline," with a 23 percent response, was the answer most often given (Public Information Office of the Orange County Public Schools, 1979, p.4).

Since 1971, the College of Education at the University of Central Florida has addressed this concern by offering a graduate course called "Behavior Problems in the Public Schools." The target group for this course is primarily inservice educators at all levels of the system. In a previous study (Barr-Johnson and Hiett, 1978), the total population of all sections of this course from 1971-1977 was surveyed regarding concerns about discipline, felt causes of problems, and effectiveness of various techniques presented in the course for classroom application. In a 32 percent return, respondents rank ordered items on a Likert Scale questionnaire according to their degree of concern about each problem area, the strength of each problem cause, and the relative effectiveness of techniques used to deal with problems. The list of techniques was based on those included in the Behavior Problems class. Definite trends were noted, especially the identification of "Parent/Family Attitudes" as the strongest cause of discipline problems.

Because the sample population consisted only of former graduate or post-baccalaureate students, the researchers did not feel the results of the survey could be generalized to a random sample of classroom teachers.

The present study was proposed to use the same survey with a group of teachers who had not had the Behavior Problems class in order to see if their concerns were similar.

Description of Study

One thousand two-hundred letters and questionnaires (see Appendix) were mailed to teachers of elementary and secondary grade levels in Orange County. The schools were selected randomly from the listing in the Florida Education Directory. The questionnaire contained the same items as those of the previous survey - discipline concerns, causes of discipline problems, examples of approaches and techniques - with the exception of the section which concerned evaluation of teaching techniques used expressly in the graduate course which this sample would not have taken. The questionnaire was mailed in March, 1979, and over the next four months 461 completed surveys were returned, or approximately a 38 percent response. These were submitted to computer analysis.

A Crosstabs program was run using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences format in the UCF computer system. Responses were tabulated for the total group of teachers responding, and additional tabulations were made for the sub-categories of respondents, including elementary and secondary levels, male and female teachers, teachers of varying experience levels and grade levels of past and current teaching. Analysis of computer printouts has been completed initially for the total population, since this was the data necessary to make a comparison with the previous survey sample. Highest and lowest areas of concern, strongest and weakest cause areas and highest and lowest effectiveness ratings were extracted from the data with the areas of "moderate" interest considered to be less significant and thus not relevant to the present comparison.

Results of Data Analysis

Table I shows the rank order of items of "Great Concern" to the total group of respondents relative to classroom management and student discipline. "Failure to finish work" was the area of greatest concern; this item was ranked in the greatest concern category by 54 percent of the respondents. Other areas of "Great Concern" were "Lack of respect for teachers" (50.1 percent), "Excessive talking" (49.0 percent), "Lack of respect for peers" (48.1 percent), "Lack of preparation" (46.2 percent), "Noisy behavior" (44.1 percent), "Dishonesty" (43.5 percent), "Ignoring school rules" (42.8 percent), and "Low student self-concept" (37.1 percent). The following items were also ranked as great concerns by 25 percent or more of the sample: "Fighting," "Stealing," "'Class Clown' behavior," "Lack of student involvement," and "Destruction of property."

By contrast, Table II shows the rank order of items of "Little or No Concern" to respondents. The items of least concern were "Drug-related problems" (64.2 percent ranking in "Little or No Concern" category) and "Sex-related behavior" (62.9 percent ranking in "Little or No Concern" category). Other items of low concern were "Truancy," "Withdrawn behavior," "Tardiness," and "Profanity." More than 35 percent of the total respondents for each item placed these in the category of least concern.

Table III shows the ranking of items which the respondents considered strongest causes of discipline and behavior problems in schools. An overwhelming 88.9 percent of the respondents considered "Parent/Family Attitudes" to be a "Strong Cause" of discipline problems in school. This was the highest percentage response of any on the entire survey. "Learning problems" was considered a "Strong Cause" by 48.5 percent, and

TABLE I

Rank Order of Behavior Problems of "Great Concern" to Teachers

(Elementary and Secondary Combined)

Aspects of Classroom Behavior	Percentage of Total Item Responses	Number of Responses	Rank Order
Failure to finish work	54.0	239	1
Lack of respect for teachers	50.1	220	2
Excessive talking	49.0	218	3
Lack of respect for peers	48.1	212	4
Lack of preparation	46.2	203	5
Noisy behavior	44.1	196	6
Dishonesty	43.5	189	7
Ignoring school rules	42.8	191	8
Low student self-concept	37.1	164	9
Fighting	28.6	124	10
Stealing	27.9	122	11
"Class Clown" behavior	27.8	120	12
Lack of student involvement	27.3	120	13
Destruction of property	26.5	113	14
Profanity	20.8	91	15
Truancy	15.6	68	16
Withdrawn behavior	14.2	61	17
Tardiness	13.6	59	18
Drug-related problems	11.2	47	19
Sex-related behavior	10.5	45	20

TABLE II

Rank Order of Behavior Problems of "Little or No Concern" to Teachers

(Elementary and Secondary Combined)

Aspects of Classroom Behavior	Percentage of Total Item Responses	Number of Responses	Rank Order
Drug-related problems	64.2	269	1
Sex-related behavior	62.9	270	2
Truancy	53.3	232	3
Withdrawn behavior	49.9	215	4
Tardiness	49.4	215	5
Profanity	38.9	170	6
Fighting	33.9	147	7
Stealing	32.4	142	8
Destruction of property	33.1	141	9
"Class Clown" behavior	27.8	120	10
Lack of student involvement	27.3	120	11
Lack of preparation	21.0	92	12
Lack of respect for teachers	19.4	85	13
Ignoring school rules	18.8	84	14
Low student self-concept	18.6	82	15
Lack of respect for peers	15.9	70	16
Dishonesty	15.0	65	17
Excessive talking	13.7	61	18
Noisy behavior	12.2	54	19
Failure to finish work	9.9	44	20

TABLE III

Rank Order of Items Rated as "Strong Cause" of or Relation to Discipline Problems

(Elementary and Secondary Combined)

Items Related to Problem Causes	Percentage of Total Item Response	Number of Responses	Rank Order
Parent/Family attitudes	88.9	402	1
Learning problems	48.5	215	2
Student self-concept	42.8	190	3
Socio-economic problems	37.8	168	4
School-caused problems (other than teacher-caused)	17.0	70	5
Teacher-caused problems	11.7	51	6

TABLE IV

Rank Order of Items Rated as "Little Cause" of or Relation to Discipline Problems

(Elementary and Secondary Combined)

Items Related to Problem Causes	Percentage of Total Item Responses	Number of Responses	Rank Order
School-caused problems (other than teacher-caused)	34.5	142	1
Teacher-caused problems	34.3	149	2
Socio-economic problems	12.4	55	3
Student self-concept	10.1	45	4
Learning Problems	7.0	31	5
Parent/Family attitudes	.7	3	6

"Student self-concept" and "Socio-economic problems" were ranked in the highest cause category by 42.8 and 37.8 percent respectively. Table IV is the complement of Table III, showing those items rated "Little Cause" of discipline problems. Less than one percent of the respondents to the "Parent/Family Attitudes" item rated this as an area of "Little Cause" of problems.

Tables V and VI show responses to approaches available to teachers in handling classroom discipline. All of the theories, approaches, and techniques listed have been included in sections of the graduate Behavior Problems course, but respondents in this sample had not taken the course. Thus, a comparative level of familiarity was sought. Table V shows ranking of approaches considered "Highly Effective" by respondents. The highest percentage response was only slightly over 25 percent ("Behavior Modification Techniques") and no technique emerged as clearly effective for the entire sample. By the same token, responses were low and mixed for approaches considered "Not at All Effective" by teachers. The technique ranked least effective in this survey was so ranked by only 10.9 percent of the respondents to that item (see Table VI).

Since no clear direction emerged on relative effectiveness or ineffectiveness of approaches to discipline problems, it seemed worthwhile to consider whether teachers were familiar with these approaches at all. Information related to this question could be derived from the "Not Applicable" column in the techniques section, since teachers were instructed to check this column if they were unfamiliar with the particular approach or had not used it. Table VII shows that over 40 percent of the respondents had not used or were unfamiliar with half of the techniques ("Moral Development Concepts" being the least familiar, with

TABLE V

Rank Order of Approaches Considered by Teachers "Highly Effective" for Classroom Management

(Combined Elementary and Secondary)

Approach, Concept or Technique	Percentage of Total Item Responses	Number of Responses	Rank Order
Behavior Modification techniques	25.1	102	1
Humanistic approaches	23.7	91	2
Reality Therapy techniques	23.0	89	3
Logical Consequences	21.4	75	4
Self-concept theories	19.7	75	5
Teacher Effectiveness Training (T.E.T.) techniques	17.3	67	6
Values clarification techniques	13.5	49	7
Transactional Analysis techniques	9.8	36	8
Discipline and the law	9.3	35	9
Moral development concepts	9.1	29	10

TABLE VI

Rank Order of Approaches Considered by Teachers "Not at All Effective" for Classroom Management

(Combined Elementary and Secondary)

Approach, Concept or Technique	Percentage of Total Item Responses	Number of Responses	Rank Order
Transactional Analysis techniques	10.9	40	1
Discipline and the law	10.1	38	2
Values clarification techniques	8.8	32	3
Humanistic approaches	7.6	29	4
Reality Therapy techniques	7.5	29	5
Logical consequences	7.4	26	6
Self-concept theories	5.8	22	7
Teacher Effectiveness Training (T.E.T.) techniques	5.4	21	8
Moral development	5.4	17	9
Behavior Modification techniques	4.4	18	10

48.9 percent of the respondents indicating the "Not Applicable" column) and that even the best known concept and the one rated highest for "effectiveness" - "Behavior Modification Techniques" - received an 18.7 percent response in the "Not Applicable" column.

Discussion of Findings

In this study, as in the previous survey of students who had taken a Behavior Problems course (Barr-Johnson and Hiett, 1978), the most overwhelming finding was that "Parent/Family Attitudes" were felt to be a primary contributor to classroom behavior problems. In both studies, nearly 90 percent of the sample chose this as a "Strong Cause" of problems. "Learning Problems" were considered a strong cause of problems by almost the same percentage of former graduate students and the random sample of teachers, but "Student Self-concept" was considered a stronger cause in the former graduate group who had taken the Behavior Problems course. Table VIII shows the comparative rankings and percentages for both groups.

The concerns of the random sample of teachers were ranked differently from those of the teacher group who had taken the Behavior Problems course. Percentages of "Great Concern" responses were highest in this study, ranging from 10.5 to 54.0 percent as compared to 5.8 to 44.9 percent in the previous study. "Low Student Self-concept," the item with the highest percent of "Great Concern" responses on the survey of former members of the Behavior Problems class, was ranked ninth by teachers in the present survey. Other items were ranked closer together in the two surveys, although percentages in the "Great Concern" category were somewhat higher. Table IX shows the comparative data.

In the evaluation of discipline approaches and techniques, there were

TABLE VII

Rank Order of Approaches Considered by Teachers as "Not Applicable" to Their Classroom or Unfamiliar to Them

(Combined Elementary and Secondary)

Approach, Concept or Technique	Percentage of Total Item Response	Number of Responses	Rank Order
Moral Development concepts	48.9	155	1
Transactional Analysis techniques	46.3	170	2
Logical Consequences	44.7	157	3
Discipline and the law	43.7	164	4
Self-concept theories	40.4	154	5
Values Clarification techniques	35.4	129	6
Reality Therapy techniques	34.9	135	7
Humanistic approaches	34.6	133	8
Teacher Effectiveness Training (T.E.T.) techniques	30.9	120	9
Behavior Modification techniques	18.7	76	10

TABLE VIII

Comparative Rank Order of Causes of Discipline Problems as Indicated by Former Graduate Students in a Behavior Problems Class and a Random Sample of Teachers

Item	Rank Order Behavior Problems Class Survey	Percentage Response	Rank Order Random Teacher Survey	Percentage Response
Parent/Family Attitudes	1	89.1	1	88.9
Learning problems	3	48.7	2	48.5
Socio-economic problems	4	31.8	4	37.8
Teacher-caused problems	5	18.3	6	11.7
Student self-concept	2	51.7	3	42.8
School-caused problems	6	15.2	5	17.0

TABLE IX

Comparative Rank Order of Concerns About Behavior
as Indicated by Former Graduate Students in a Behavior Problems Class
and a Random Sample of Teachers

Item	Rank Order Behavior Problems Class Survey	Percentage Response	Rank Order Random Sample Survey	Percentage Response
Destruction of property	11	24.1	14	26.5
Dishonesty	4	37.0	7	43.5
Drug-related problems	17	14.2	19	11.2
Excessive talking	5	36.0	3	49.0
Failure to finish work	2	44.1	1	54.0
Fighting	13	20.7	10	28.6
Ignoring school rules	10	25.0	8	42.8
Lack of preparation	8	31.9	5	46.2
Lack of respect for peers	6	35.6	4	48.1
Lack of respect for teachers	3	37.9	2	50.1
Lack of student involvement	12	20.9	13	27.3
Low student self-concept	1	44.9	9	37.1
Noisy behavior	7	33.9	6	44.1
Profanity	18	11.6	15	20.8
Sex-related behavior	20	5.8	20	10.5
Stealing	9	27.1	11	27.9
Tardiness	19	10.1	18	13.6
Truancy	16	17.3	16	15.6
Withdrawn behavior	14	20.1	17	14.2
"Class Clown" behavior	15	19.2	12	27.8

wide discrepancies among respondents in this survey, with no item receiving clear acceptance or nonacceptance. This was less true of the previous study. A much higher level of unfamiliarity was expressed by teachers in the random group, and thus techniques had probably not been tried by them in the classroom. The most effective technique for the random teacher group was "Behavior Modification" which ranked fourth in the Behavior Problem class survey (percentages were about the same, however). Table X shows comparative rankings and percentages of "Highly Effective" techniques in the two studies. Perhaps the most significant finding in this category was not the comparison of the two groups but the lack of familiarity expressed by the teachers who had not had the Behavior Problems class with the various approaches. Apparently, the material from this course is not routinely reaching teachers through other means, such as inservice programs.

The differences found in the two groups surveyed could be a function of the respondents themselves, rather than the effect of having had or not had a class in Behavior Problems. In the area of self-concept, for instance, it is possible that those teachers who enroll in graduate programs are already more oriented toward this aspect of the student and slightly less concerned about other kinds of student behavior problems. The self-concept emphasis would indicate a more student-centered than subject-centered approach.

The strong verification in this study of the concern about Parent/Family Attitudes and their influence on classroom behavior problems suggests that schools and communities should aggressively pursue partnerships in this area. Communication between schools and families seems especially crucial in the area of student behavior.

TABLE X

Comparative Rank Order and Percentages of Techniques Considered "Highly Effective" by Former Graduate Students in Behavior Problems Class and a Random Sample of Teachers

Item	Rank Order Behavior Problems Class Survey	Percentage Response	Rank Order Random Teacher Survey	Percentage Response
Moral development concepts	8	12.9	10	9.1
Behavior Modification techniques	4	26.9	1	25.1
Discipline and the law	10	7.5	9	9.3
Values Clarification techniques	6	23.3	7	13.5
Transactional Analysis techniques	9	12.2	8	9.8
Teacher Effectiveness Training (T.E.T.) techniques	5	26.2	6	17.3
Humanistic approaches	1	34.3	2	23.7
Reality Therapy techniques	2	33.3	3	23.0
Self-concept theories	3	27.0	5	19.7
Logical Consequences	7	16.8	4	21.4

The results of this study again show teachers less concerned about the more sensational "media-type" problems (drug and sex behavior, truancy and fighting) and more concerned about motivational and interactional problems of students, teachers, schools and families. These problems - failing to complete school work and lack of preparation, lack of respect for teachers and peers, talking and noisy behavior, dishonesty, ignoring school rules, and low student self-concept - will require long-range developmental and preventive programs, not "crash" remedies, and it is clear that the problem must be dealt with in the broader community, not just in the classroom.

APPENDIX

Letter to Participants
Sample Questionnaire

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA · Formerly-
FLORIDA TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY
BOX 25000 ORLANDO, FLORIDA 32816

College of Education
Teaching Analysis Department
March 9, 1979

Dear Teacher:

We are conducting a survey for the purposes of determining major teacher concerns in the area of discipline and how we might best address these concerns.

During the past year, we contacted the members of our graduate classes in Behavior Problems to analyze their attitudes toward classroom discipline, and now we would like to determine whether the results we found are generalizable to a wider sample of classroom teachers.

Your answers will assist us in the development and revision of our courses in classroom management as well as contribute valuable data concerning a major problem in the schools today. We would appreciate your inclusion of any additional comments you may have besides those directly requested. Please be assured that all individual responses will be kept confidential; in fact, you are asked not to sign your name on the form.

When you have completed the questionnaire, please return it to us in the stamped envelope provided. Thank you very much for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Virginia Barr-Johnson, Ph.D.
Associate Professor

Sharon Lee Hiett, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor

VB-J/SLH/lm

Enc.

(If you have already filled out one of these questionnaires, please disregard this request.)

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Public Schools

Teaching Analysis Department
University of Central Florida
Orlando, FL 32816

PLEASE COMPLETE BOTH SIDES.

A. Personal Data

1. Male ____ Female ____
2. Are you currently teaching? Yes ___ No ___ Have you taught? Yes ___ No ___
3. If yes, how many years? 1-4___ 5-9___ 10-19 __ 20+ ___
4. What grade level do you teach? (or have you taught)
   K-3 ___ 4-6 ___ 7-9 ___ 10-12 ___ Other ___
5. Have you ever had a course is classroom management/discipline?
   Yes ___ No ___ What year? _____

B. What aspects of classroom behavior and discipline currently cause you the most concern in your students? (Please check)

	Great Concern	Moderate Concern	Little or no Concern
1. Destruction of property			
2. Dishonesty			
3. Drug-related problems			
4. Excessive talking			
5. Failure to finish work			
6. Fighting			
7. Ignoring school rules			
8. Lack of preparation			
9. Lack of respect for peers			
10. Lack of respect for teachers			
11. Lack of student involvement			
12. Low student self-concept			
13. Noisy behavior			
14. Profanity			
15. Sex-related behavior			
16. Stealing			
17. Tardiness			
18. Truancy			
19. Withdrawn behavior			
20. "Class Clown" behavior			

C. How much do you feel the following items relate to or cause discipline problems?

	Strong Cause	Moderate Cause	Little Cause
1. Parent/family attitudes			
2. Learning problems			
3. Socio-economic problems			
4. Teacher-caused problems			
5. Student self-concept			
6. School-caused problems (other than teacher-caused)			
7. Other (please list)			
_____			
_____			

- OVER -

D. Have you used any of the following concepts or techniques in handling classroom behavior? Please indicate the degree of effectiveness you have experienced with each. "Effectiveness" may mean actual use of the approach or just added understanding you have gained through the concept. Use the "Not Applicable" column if you are not familiar with the concept or technique or have not used it.

	Highly Effective	Moderately Effective	Not at all Effective	Not Applicable
1. Moral development concepts (Piaget, Kohlberg)				
2. Behavior Modification techniques (Madsens, Skinner)				
3. Discipline and the law				
4. Values clarification techniques (Simon, et.al.)				
5. Transactional analysis techniques (James, Jongewald, Harris)				
6. Teacher Effectiveness Training (T.E.T.) techniques (Gordon)				
7. Humanistic approaches (Rogers)				
8. Reality therapy techniques (Glasser)				
9. Self-concept theories (Combs, Purkey)				
10. Logical consequences (Dreikurs)				
11. Others (please list)				
_____				
_____				

E. Do you have any other concerns relative to classroom management and discipline? Please comment here or attach an additional sheet if needed.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME

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